

called *thetis*, and which he described as a male. Göze makes a doubtful reference to this in 1780. Schneider in 1787, Borkhausen in 1788 and 1789, and Soriba in 1791 refer again to this name; I have not at hand the means of verifying how far they referred this name to the species now under consideration, or whether like Rottemburg they regarded it as a distinct species. Nothing further was heard of this till Kirby in 1871 gives it in a Synonymic Catalogue and Scudder took the matter up in 1875. Here is what Tutt says on the subject (*British Lepidoptera*, x, p. 326, note): "There can be no doubt whatever that the so-called ♂ of von Rottemburg's *thetis* was the strongly blue-tinted ♀, the ♀ of *thetis* the brown ♀, and *bellargus* ♂ the ♂ of the same species." Alas for priority! In spite of the fact that all these names are of the same year, that the name *thetis* was only due to a mistake, and had only "page priority" and had not been heard of in this connection for nearly a century, it was thought incumbent to overthrow the practice of nearly 100 years and introduce this name *thetis* as against the well-established *adonis* and the well-understood *bellargus*! Could folly go further? Comment appears to me superfluous.

MORE ABOUT NAMES.

By T. BAINBRIGGE FLETCHER, R.N., F.L.S., F.R.E.S., F.Z.S.

There are perhaps few entomological subjects on which so much ink has been spilt as the subject of Nomenclature. Whilst most desire uniformity and fixity of names we find two opposed schools of thought, those who are derisively termed "priority-mongers" and those ultra-conservatives who champion the cause of "any old name, so long as 'I've always used it.'"

What is a name? To this question the most succinct answer, that "every name is a term for a definition," is given by Rothschild and Jordan in the Introduction to their *Revision of the Sphingidae* (p. xviii), and it is scarcely necessary to commend their clearly-written and common-sense remarks on the Principles of Nomenclature to those interested in this subject. For a name to be valid, it must have been published with a description, or a definition, or an indication, such indication being a bibliographic reference, or a published figure, or a definite citation of an earlier name for which a new name is proposed.

A homonym is the same name for two or more things. Synonyms are different names for one and the same thing. A generic name is rejected as a homonym if it has previously been used for any other genus; a specific name is rejected as a homonym if it has previously been used for another species or sub-species within the same genus. Rejected homonyms can never be used validly: some authors seem to suppose that, if A. described a species as *Tinea albella* in 1800 and B. described a different species as *Tinea albella* in 1810, the name *albella*, B. 1810, remains valid if that species is placed in another genus and called (say) *Gelechia albella*, B. 1810. It is not so. The name *Tinea albella*, B. 1810, was a primary homonym of *Tinea albella*, A. 1800, and never was or can be a valid name. Rejected synonyms, however, can be used again (if otherwise valid) in the case of erroneously suppressed names. Thus, in our hypothetical case, if C. had described

in 1820 under the name *Tinea nivella* the same species as B.'s *albella*, this species might have been standing in a List as *Gelechia albella*, B. 1810 = *nivella*, C. 1820; but, on finding that *albella*, B. 1810, was not valid (as being a primary homonym), the name would become *Gelechia nivella*, C. 1820 = *albella*, B. 1810 (nec A. 1800). The name, *Tinea albella*, B. 1810, is called a primary homonym of *Tinea albella*, A. 1800, as these two names are the same combination of the two names *Tinea* and *albella*. We may have a case in which two (or more) different species were originally described under the same specific name but in different genera, e.g., *Tinea atrella*, D. 1830, and *Gelechia atrella*, E. 1840; if by reclassification these two species are placed in the same genus, both specific names cannot stand in that genus, the later-described name sinking as a secondary homonym of the earlier name and becoming a synonym of its own specific name, the next synonym coming into use for this or, if necessary, a new name being given. A secondary homonym, however, remains dormant and can be used again so soon as it ceases to clash with the prior similar name in the same genus. The process is sometimes complicated, but usually there is not much difficulty in selecting the name which is "correct," provided that the proper combinations and dates are available; it is in this latter point that nearly all Catalogues are so defective; they simply will not give the full combinations and dates under which species were described, besides omitting numerous synonyms, with the result that many changes are found to be necessary because the names hitherto in use were still-born and can never be brought to life. This process, it will be seen, depends on the strict application of the Law of Priority, by which alone we can ascertain what is the scientifically-correct name of a genus or species. Between the "priority-monger," who vigorously applies rules to endeavour to secure uniformity, and the "any old name, so long as I've always used it" man, who has little desire for uniformity (or even scientific exactitude), there is a great gulf fixed.

Mr Wheeler is unfortunate in his example when he says " 'sibylla' must remain 'sibylla' and 'camilla' 'camilla'." (As a matter of fact, Linnaeus named his species *Papilio Nymphalis sibilla* in 1767, but Mr Wheeler says that he is indifferent to a mere matter of spelling.) The early English Entomologists were in no doubt as to the name given by Linnaeus to our English butterfly and we find, for example, Donovan (*Nat. Hist. Brit. Ins.* VII, 75-77, t. 244: 1798) going into the question of its correct name and saying:—"We consider the Common English Admirable, as the true *P. Camilla*; and that *Sibilla*, and not *Camilla* is the Austrian species, as we have received it from that country." Harris (1766 and 1775), Lewin (1795), Haworth (1803), Samouelle (1819), Curtis (1826), Stephens (1827), and Westwood (1841), all knew it as *camilla*. The two names seem to have been mixed up by Fabricius, and Hübner wrongly figured *camilla*, Linn., as *Papilio sybilla* [yet another spelling!] in his *Samml. Eur. Schmett.*, Pap. t. 22 ff. 103-105 (1799-1800). As it was less trouble to consult Hübner's pretty plates than to consult the original reference in *Mus. Lud. Ulr.*, we find the name "sibylla" applied to *camilla*, Linn. 1764, by Herrich-Schäffer (1844), Newman (1871), with the alteration "sibilla" by Stainton (1857) and by later authors. There has therefore been no continuity in the use of the name "sibilla" even in England, where

for some eighty years after Linnaeus had named it in 1764 it was correctly known as *camilla*, the name now restored to it after an approximately equal number of years' misuse of the name "*sibilla*." Aurivillius (*Recensio critica Lep. Mus. Lud. Ulricae*, pp. 101-102: 1882) said definitely:—"Nullum potest esse dubium, quin sit haec species *P. Camilla* L. et eo nomine appellari debeat"; this was over fifty years ago. When Mr Wheeler says that "no rule can be accepted that makes it uncertain to which of two or more objects a name is applied" he advances a platitude with which all can agree: but in cases such as "*camilla* versus *sibilla*," there is no question of any "rule"—it is a matter of fact, to be determined by consultation of the original description (or figure or type-specimen, as the case may be—provided, of course, that such is decisive, as it is in this case). To continue in the use of an exposed error is utterly unscientific, to say the least.

As for the spelling of a name being "of the most profound indifference so long as no confusion arises," so that "those with even some slight classical knowledge are . . . at liberty to write . . . *egeria*," it is unfortunately the fact that it is often the people with some classical knowledge (slight or otherwise) who so often disagree about the correct spelling. When I find a classical scholar of the calibre of Mr Meyrick using *aegeria* (*Handb.*, p. 337: 1895, and *Rev. Handb.*, p. 348: 1928), whilst Mr Wheeler tells us that it should be *egeria*, we can merely leave the classical scholars to fight it out amongst themselves, whilst noting that Linnaeus, who named this butterfly and who had an undoubted right to give it any name that he liked, called it *aegeria*, whilst Staudinger was equally correct in bestowing the name *egerides*. As for "no confusion" arising, it is unfortunately the case that these alterations do lead to confusion and unnecessary trouble. If I want to look up a reference to this species in a publication, why should I have to look it up in an Index (if any) under two letters, A and E—to say nothing of the fact that, on Mr Wheeler's argument, some other author might transform the spelling into "*oegeria*" or even "*haegeria*" or other variations too awful to contemplate? Lord Walsingham, who was something of a classical scholar, called a genus *Odites*; Mr Meyrick considers that this should have been *Hodites*. Latreille described a genus as *Yponomeuta*, which Zeller "improved" to *Hyponomeuta*. Such classical emendations are nothing but an infernal nuisance, especially when they affect the initial letter which is used for indexing. Would Mr Wheeler "correct" the name of the Clearwing genus "*Aegeria*" to "*Egeria*"? If not, why not? What is sauce for the goose, etc. It is usually understood that the scientific names of Insects must be either Latin or latinized.

When Mr Wheeler considers that "the law of priority *unless under very severe restrictions* [not specified] is the one thing that makes fixity of nomenclature impossible," he is, of course, quite entitled to his opinion. It is not, however, the Law of Priority that has introduced confusion but the lack of its strict application without fear or favour. As Kirkaldy put it (*Catalogue of the Hemiptera*, p. xiv: 1909):—"The priority rule is adopted not from any idea of credit to first describers, who often do not deserve any, but because it admits of the most entirely mechanical application, thus tending to eliminate

personal prejudice and to ensure stability." The Law of Priority is no modern invention, as some people seem to think: thus, Stephens, over a hundred years ago, wrote:—"In restoring the name *Aretia* to this genus, I have adhered to the rule, which is with justice generally adopted, of employing that which has the claim of priority" (*Ill. Brit. Entom., Haust.* II. 69: I.xii. 1828). There will undoubtedly be cases where an older name may be discovered and will have to replace one in current use—I have at present a long list of names of Microlepidoptera awaiting execution for this and other reasons—but there are comparatively few of such older names which are likely to be found applicable. No one (or only a very exceptional person) makes changes because he likes changing names but because he considers it necessary to do so for the sake of scientific exactitude. To pass on a name, which is known to be wrong, seems to me on the same moral plane as passing on a counterfeit coin.

When Mr Warren tells us that "the only possible remedy is an absolute control of nomenclature by the International Commission," and when Mr Wheeler tells us that, if only his scheme of 1912 had been accepted, everyone would have lived happily ever afterwards, I can only agree with both these views in differing from either. There has been too much of this attempt on the part of the tail to wag the dog, and as an Entomologist I refuse to accept rules made by Zoologists. Granted that Entomology may be described as a part (eighty per cent. or more) of Zoology; but Zoology is only a part of Biology, and yet the Botanists have their own Code. No Code of Rules—and the Zoological Code is unduly complex, far more so than the German 1894 Code, which was comparatively simple, yet comprehensive—can provide for all possible cases which may arise nor, when doubtful cases do arise, can any speedy decision be obtained from the Commission. Nor is the fact that any name is under consideration notified in any publication which Entomologists are likely to see. Further, when opinions are rendered, they are not made accessible (and are often of no interest) to Entomologists. And again, given that decisions have been rendered and made available, the utmost that the Commission can do is to pronounce on the validity of a name: it is not the business of the Commission to pronounce on the applicability of a name to a particular insect, and it is on this point that there is often ground for considerable difference of opinion. So, even if Mr Warren's opinion prevailed, we should still be far from unanimity of thought or action. It may be added that "absolute control of nomenclature" would doubtless be disclaimed by the Commission, which has itself stated that it has no power to force zoologists or others to adopt the International Rules. Mr Wheeler apparently thinks that such unanimity can be achieved by a show of hands at an Entomological Congress. I was at the Congress in Paris in 1932, together with about 300 other Entomologists, of whom only about thirty were sufficiently interested to attend the section on Nomenclature. What is the value of the votes of the ninety per cent. who were not thus interested? And are those who could not attend the Congress to be ignored? But to deal with nomenclatorial problems requires more than mere interest; it requires considerable experience of work on Nomenclature and also a good knowledge of the literature of the particular group. A better

plan, in doubtful cases, is to circulate them to those relatively few workers who are really in a position to give an opinion: this was done, for example, by Sir George Hampson some forty years ago, as regards certain specific questions, and the correspondence which ensued can still be read to advantage.

Another method is to publish one's own conclusions, not with the idea of ramming them down other people's throats but simply to bring any changes to their notice, leaving them free to adopt such changes or not. This I did some ten years ago in the case of the generic names of the Microlepidoptera. If the conclusions put forward are based on sound premises, they will probably gain acceptance by serious workers, who are in the best position to judge and who act as leaders. Catalogues have probably more influence on the general usage of names than is often realized, but unfortunately many authors tend to copy former catalogues (with all their errors and omissions) without verifying their references or tracing back the history of the names which they employ: thus, Rebel (Cat. No. 2012) misquoted Hübner's figure 69 of *pygmaeana* as "89," and in Kennel we find this blindly copied as "Hb.f.89," and this mistake will probably be repeated by other copiers. In other cases, as Mr Warren remarks in perhaps rather too general terms, the names used have been based on personal prejudices rather than on facts: thus, in his recent Catalogue (Part 79) Gaede quotes *Isophrietis tanacetella*, Schrank 1802, as a synonym of *striatella*, Hb., t. 42, f. 288, for which he gives the date 1802. Hübner's plate 42 was published sometime between 1800 and 1805, but we have no evidence that it was issued in or before 1802, and, curiously enough, under *malvella*, Hb., on page 234 of this same Catalogue Gaede quotes the date "1803" for t. 41 f. 281, whilst on page 411 he correctly quotes 1800-1805 for Hb., t. 41, f. 283. The combination, *Tinea striatella*, was preoccupied by Hübner himself in 1796 (t. 23, f. 154), and was first used by Schiffermüller in 1775. Under no circumstances, therefore, can *striatella*, Hb. 1800-1805, be the correct name for this species.

As for suspension of rules to produce a list of Nomina Conservanda, this should only be done on the very rarest occasions, and in the case of really outstanding and well-known names which would otherwise be displaced, usually by mere accident.

Musca domestica, Linn. 1758, as the genotype of *Musca*, Linn. 1758, is a case in point, as this is a well-known name not only of interest to Entomologists. But, when we find the author of a small local list putting forward numerous names, which are of no great interest to workers in or outside of Entomology, for fixation as Nomina Conservanda, there is brought into question the value of a rule which is apparently to be broken on every occasion that some otherwise necessary alteration does not meet with the personal approval of one particular worker. Proverbially, hard cases make bad law, and any rule, which can be broken practically with impunity, is soon brought into contempt. Not, of course, that the Commission has the power to force anyone to adopt their rule.

Mr Warren has pointed out that the differing usage of generic names for the species of *Argynnis* is a matter of personal opinion regarding their classification and not merely of Nomenclature. In all larger genera we find groups of species more nearly allied to one

another than to the others, and it is entirely a matter of personal opinion whether such groups should be separated as distinct genera or retained within a larger genus, *i.e.*, whether their differences or resemblances preponderate. This is purely a matter for decision by the specialist worker on each Family, and the personal opinion of different specialists is not always the same. But when, for example, we find in the so-called "Official List of British Butterflies" that eleven unfortunate species of "Blues" are split up into ten genera, we want to know on what grounds this has been done before swallowing these names wholesale. Had a key to these genera been given, we might have been in a position to consider how far they were really of generic value, *i.e.*, divided off on characters which would be considered of generic importance in any other group of Insects.

The unfortunate person, who suffers most by varying usages of names, is perhaps the Editor of an entomological magazine, who has to prepare an Index at the end of the volume and finds that one and the same insect has been referred to under several different generic and specific names. To insist on uniformity is impracticable, and many contributors will refuse to write if the names which they have used in their manuscripts are altered into others published over their signatures, as if they had used them. This is a most objectionable proceeding. It seems best that any editorial emendation should be introduced within square brackets, to show that it is an interpolation, thus giving the name as used by the author and also any other name preferred by the Editor for the sake of uniformity—and, if we may dare to whisper it, perhaps also for the education of contributors, all of whom cannot be expected to be versed in the latest style in names.

NOTE:—Why "Clifton" Blue? So far as I know, the English name was first applied to this species by Moses Harris (*The English Lepidoptera*, pp. 1-2, 1775), who called it the "Clifden Blue," as it was found on "commons near Clifden." Haworth (1803), Rennie (1832), Wood (1833), Westwood (1841), Newman (1870), all called it the Clifden Blue.—T.B.-F.

The combination, *Papilio thetis*, having been used by Drury in 1773, was not available for use in 1775. The combination, *Papilio adonis*, was also used by Cramer in 1775 for a *Morpho* from Surinam.—T.B.-F.

GENERIC NOMENCLATURE.

When the Royal Entomological Society appointed a Committee "to prepare lists of specific names to be fixed as genotypes of genera of British insects with a view to the suspension where necessary of the law of priority in respect of generic names," one was led to believe that the vexation of spirit engendered by constant changes in nomenclature was at last to be relieved. I believe I am not alone in regarding nomenclature as being a subject of the most trivial importance, names being given to insects for the same reason that they are given to towns and rivers, or to such objects as spades. On such a view the law of priority had long since become as inconvenient in entomological work as it would be in the ordinary use of language, if we were constantly to change place-names or descriptive nouns on the discovery that they were differently applied in the past. The terms of reference